

Town of Tolland

Hicks Municipal Building, 21 Tolland Green, Tolland, CT 06084 - Conference Room A

Public Informational/CEPA scoping meeting
Project # 142-149

December 10, 2015

Presented by CT DOT

1. Opening comments:
Steve Werbner, Town Manager

Werbner said the area to be discussed is a historic area in the Town of Tolland of great significance. He said the Town initiated the project due to safety concerns along the Rt 195 corridor. He said the Town received a grant of over 300K to study safety from the Town Green and Old Post Road and that the Town's recommendations went to the state in 2010 but since that time the Town has been working with the State in terms of how to best achieve the goal of increased safety and decreased travel speeds in the historic area. Werbner said he considers this a partnership and is looking forward to suggestions from the public. He said he believes the project is very important to the town and hopes to achieve consensus with the community. He said he hopes the work will be completed during the 2017 construction cycle.

Introductions of the State Team Members: Joe Arshinal , Matt Vail, Will Britinenal, Steve Hall, Kevin Flemming, Mark McMillin, Mike Marzin, and Katherine Levidealia

Handouts were provided to some of the attendees with comment form that can be submitted formally with concerns or requests. 2 week comment period.

2. Joe Arshinal introduced himself as the Project Engineer. He provided the following information as an overview of the area.

- an aerial map of the project and identified the location where Rt.195 and Rt.74 meet
- Indicated that the project is located in historic district.
- Identified the location of the stop locators, stop signs and traffic lights and historical buildings
- Reviewed the speed limits in the area and that the average speed limit is 30mph and the average drive speed is 35mph.
- Reviewed the Average daily traffic figures for the involved roads
- Reviewed the geometry of the intersection and said skew angles were defined and discussed that in the areas present condition it is difficult for trucks and buses to make some of turns. He also added that there is a degree of uncertainty regarding which way the cars will go, towards 195 or 74.
- He acknowledged that the area is complicated which contributes to accidents and congestion. Photos of the intersection were taken from each direction.
- He reviewed the crash history data for 2012 – 2014. He said most accidents occurred at the intersections and included 24 accidents and 4 with injuries. He broke down the figures and said 10 accidents occurred at the intersection of Rt 195 and Rt 74, 5 accidents occurred at Old Post Road and Rt 195 and 6 accidents occurred at the intersection of Old Stafford Road and Rt 195.

Arshinal then reviewed the project history as follows:

- 2/2008 CRCOG – study of existing conditions.
- 3/2008 public open house
- 4/2008 workshop to discuss alternatives
- 12/2008 public workshop
- 11/2009 public workshop
- 12/2009 open house
- 3/2010 Meeting with Tolland Town Council – Town Council approves a plan
- 2011 CROG executive study

- 9/2011 State and Town made a request for funding
- 5/2013 CTDOT stake holders meeting
- 6/2013 plan was revised
- 7/2013 – Town signed resolution supporting scope
- 5/2015 Meeting with historical societies, Labadia regarding feasible alternatives and an alternative analysis
- 6/2015 Revised plan provided to the Town

3. Steve Hall – DOT highway design

Provided an overview of the details of the project and said the goal is to calm traffic and improve safety. He provided the following information.

- Northern gateway from Old Stafford Road and 74
 - Wetlands were identified as well as historic properties and the retaining wall.
 - He said the proposed design includes slowing vehicles prior to entering the area by adding some curves prior to entering intersection as well as some splitter islands to calm speeds. He said this section would only require 2 sliver acquisitions to build sidewalks and aesthetic treatments are to be discussed.
- Old Stafford Road and Rt 74
 - He said the curve leading into this intersection on Rt 195 is rated for 42 miles an hour.
 - He said the proposed design would decrease the curve rating to 35 miles an hour as well as removing the inverted Y and a regular intersection would be created. He said this would decrease the overall footprint. Also planned is a 9-foot wide shoulder so vehicles could travel around a car turning on to Rt 74.
- Rt 74 and Rt 195
 - He said this currently is an uncontrolled intersection. He said the turn radius is difficult for buses and unsafe for people walking or bicycling.
 - He said the proposal includes normalizing the intersection to a T type intersection with a stop sign at the end of Rt 74. He said all on street parking would be maintained and splitter island would be added to slow cars down. He said sidewalks and crosswalks were moved to reflect how people move.
 - He said there would be a reallocation of the green space. The southern green would be made smaller and northern green will be make larger with a net overall increase to the Town Green.
- Old Post Road and Rt 195
 - He said this is a high traffic volume area with the traffic light.
 - He said the retaining wall and homes are close to the road making design a challenge.
 - He said the proposal includes building a left turn lane to turn left on to Old Post Road. He said this would require using a small part of the Green to create the left turn lane and a splitter island would be build at the Southern Gateway. He said splitter islands slow traffic and create refuge for pedestrians when crossing road.
 - He said the retaining wall is unsafe presently and would propose to extend the retaining wall to create a more safe condition.
 - He said the splitter island could be granite curbing with cobblestones, or planting areas.
- Green Area
 - Northern green 8538 increase in green space
 - Southern green 6000 decrease in green space
- Historic Impacts
 - He said the changes would alter the historical nature but the representatives of State Historic Preservation Office from the State support this project as proposed.
- He said the Office of Environmental Planning was consulted regarding water and air quality

4. Mark McMillin – historic process

- Section 106 process includes the following steps

1. Initiate Section 106 which includes review by the federal government regarding the historic nature of the area and to review historic resources
 2. Identification of historic properties
 3. Assessment of any impact to historic properties
 4. Field research to identify any other historic implications including an archeologic investigation, which has not completed yet.
- Discussion regarding changing a historic alignment. The historic commission agreed that there are adverse effects to historic properties. He said a Memorandum of agreement has been written and including what mitigation could be, based on findings.
 - Other items reviewed:
 - Rights of way will require 2 sliver acquisitions
 - Traffic will be maintained during construction
 - Construction planning will be completed by August 2017 with construction completed in the spring of 2018.
 - The cost is estimated at 4 million dollars, 80% of the money would come from the federal government and 20% from the State

5. Michael Marzie

Discussion of impacts to private property. He reviewed the locations of the sliver acquisitions. He said title searches have been completed and that property owners would be notified regarding whether the plan would require a partial take or an easement. Compensation to property owners will be offered. He encouraged property owners to speak with the appraisers and try to have a representative present during their inspection to point out things of value on your property including underground sprinklers, septic systems and well locations. He said he is the main contact as the property owners make decisions. He also said eminent domain could be applied as long as avenues have been exhausted but is very hopeful things can be worked out without having to use it.

Meeting was then opened for questions of meeting attendees.

1. A citizen said Rt 195 in Town is used as a parade route and asked how would the splitter islands impact the parade route?

The State representatives did not know the area was used as a parade route but recommended that people could walk around the islands. Many attendees thought that was not realistic.

2. The owner of Tolland Red and White asked how the plan would affect their parking lot.

The State representative said it would not affect parking negatively, the proposed plan would provide a more defined parking area.

She also asked about Tolland Green Road South and whether drivers would be able to make a left at the intersection with Rt 74.

The State representative said at the end of Tolland Green Road South would not allow a left hand turn; only a right turn would be permitted.

3. A citizen asked what would be the path out of the Hicks Museum?

The State representative said the traffic path out of Hicks Museum would only be able to take a right or go straight.

4. A citizen said there was some concern that coming from Rt 74 and attempting to make a left on to Rt 195 might be dangerous.

5. A citizen asked if traffic lights have been considered?

The state representatives said there has been a lot of opposition to traffic lights from town citizens.

6. A citizen asked if this work is going to be completed in conjunction with the other Rt 195 projects?

The State representative said that these projects are not related.

7. A citizen asked if the splitter islands affect the driveway to the church parking lot on Rt 195.

The State representative said the splitter islands would not affect any of the driveways.

8. A citizen asked if a right hand turn lane being considered on Rt 195 to turn on to Old Post Road?

The State representative said it does not seem necessary based on traffic patterns.

9. A citizen asked if Old Post Road would be changed in anyway?

The State representative said only the pavement would be fixed.

10. A citizen commented that there is a lot of traffic at the Old Post Road and Rt 195 intersection.

11. A citizen asked if other traffic considerations were used besides ADTs? Suggest that turning movements be considered as well.

The State representative said turning movements and other calculations were considered, but they are just not available at this meeting, but can be provided to the Town.

12. A citizen commented that traffic patterns are going to change because the Rt 74 and Rt 195 interchange will be better and asked how that would impact the other intersections.

13. A citizen commented that the additional lanes and the splitter islands will not slow traffic and may cause an increase in noise because of trucks using jake breaks.

14. A citizen asked whether the proposed Gateway Zone was considered and what changes were based on those figures?

The State representative said traffic patterns were projected over 20 years and volumes are based on those figures.

15. A citizen asked about the visibility from Old Post Road.

The State representative said the grade of road would be decreased to improve visibility.

16. A citizen asked about snow removal on the splitter islands.

The State representative said islands would not be cleared and side and crosswalks would be cleared as they are today.

17. A citizen asked about the intersection with Old Stafford Road.

The State representative said the proposal is to normalize the intersection and also includes making the curve into Town slower so that cars would move slower.

18. A citizen asked that the flow of church traffic be considered and that people frequently turn left coming out of the church parking lot on to Rt 195.

19. A citizen asked about the rate of accidents and if all of these changes were being made because of the accident rate?

The State representative said it is partly because of the accidents but also because of awkward configuration.

The citizen said they do not believe that islands will slow traffic.

The State representative said the small splitter islands would split traffic, creating a curvature, which has been found to slow traffic. He added that the curve in the road entering Town would also be changed to slow traffic.

20. A citizen said she lives on Rt 74 right near the Green and that leaving her driveway is hazardous. She said the accident totals seem small and she does not think people understand the rights of way. She said is very concerned about sight lines and that you cannot see people coming from Rt 74 (Willington).

21. A citizen expressed concern about cars speeding on Rt. 195 and asked if rumble strips or texture in pavement were considered.

The State representative said these are not being considered at this time in the roadway but could be considered in the crosswalks.

The citizen also asked if walkways be painted.

Another citizen said she was completely against rumble strips or texture due to the noise.

22. A citizen said they like change on Old Stafford Road. But asked about Tolland Green South and whether it is it going to be one way.

The State representative said it is not being considered.

She said she would drive from Tolland Green South to Tolland Green North and on to Old Stafford Road to avoid some of the “nonsense” this plan would create, which would increase traffic on the little side road.

23. A citizen asked if a temporary safety measure, a mirror, could be added on Tolland Green North to Tolland Green South could be added to improve site line down Rt 74. The citizen asked whom this could be requested from?

24. A citizen asked what the new sidewalks would be constructed from?

The State representative said sidewalks would be maintained as bluestone sidewalks.

25. A citizen asked what is being proposed in front of the Jailhouse Museum?

The State representative said from Tolland Green North on to Rt 74 (making left) would be restricted.

26. A citizen asked how many property owners would be losing property?

The State representative said in total, 2500 sqft will be affected, most of which is land that is already owned by Town. Most changes to private property would be grading.

27. A citizen asked if the crosswalk could be maintained from Tolland Green South to North (from Red and White store to Tolland Green North)?

The State representative said it was something that could be considered and added

28. A citizen asked how future proof the plan is?

The State representative said at this time the volumes were calculated out to the year 2036 and still do not meet 8-hour traffic totals. In addition, he added that T intersections are amenable to signals in the future if traffic warrants in the future.

29. A citizen asked the average wait time a traffic light?

The State representative said a good light wait time is 10-20 seconds and a poorly designed light up to 50 seconds.

30. A citizen said they were not in favor of splitter islands.

The State representative said speeds around splitter islands would add curvatures and should slow traffic despite the road being the same width. Drivers see the visual break, slow down and enter the curve at a slower rate. Stonewalls do not slow traffic and research has found that splitter islands are more of an alert. Splitter islands break up the road visually and mentally and alerts drivers that something is coming up. They are known to have a traffic calming effect.

31. A citizen said once the locations of the islands are known, they become less calming over time. She said would like the goal to be a decrease of speed through Green. She is concerned about the neighborhood and the historic elements of the town. Splitter islands are not historic. And added that this plan does not solve some of the major problems. Why can't there be a T intersection to end Rt 195 and start Rt 74?

32. A citizen asked if the traffic light on Rt 195 could be triggered? The citizen added that she has concerns regarding the splitter islands and snow collection.

The State representatives said it could when there is the left turn lane.

33. A citizen said she believes that no one wants accidents in Tolland but that this seems a lot to do about nothing because the accident numbers are small. She thinks the plan is a little excessive for what is there and that the majority of people do not want any changes. She said she is worried that State is just going to do what they want adding accidents will happen. She said she does not think that Town citizens want these changes, in her opinion.

34. A citizen questioned the ADT numbers and added that they were surprised that everything was based on only 3 years of data. The citizen said they were concerned that the present conditions don't warrant the construction and the costs.

35. A citizen said that the Town and State government should be focused on the neighbors and would prefer tax money be spent to fix what is present currently and this project should be low priority.

36. A citizen said her concern are the speeds entering the historic district because she says that speeds are much higher than the State's estimates. She said she is worried that the side lanes would make things more dangerous. She suggested decreasing the speed limits and asked what else could be done to decrease speed limits?

The State representative said changing the speed limits would need to be requested by the Town to the State.

37. A citizen said she lives on the Town Green and she thinks that there are many “near miss” accidents that are not counted and that something should be done in the area to improve safety.

38. A citizen asked if the proposed changes would change the historic district designation?

The State representative said the changes would not change the historical district designation.

39. A citizen asked if a walk could be added from Red and White to the North Side of Tolland Green. The citizen also suggested adding stop signs at the end of Tolland Green North and South.

40. A citizen asked what the orange marks on the maps were.

The State representative said that the orange marks on Tolland Green are proposed sidewalks.

41. A citizen asked if traffic would flow from Tolland Green North to/from South?

The State representative said yes.

42. A citizen asked if there could be stop signs added at end of Tolland Green North and South? And if there could be a new stop sign on Rt 74 and a sidewalk?

43. A citizen asked how the new sidewalks would be maintained?

The State representative said this could be discussed further.

44. A citizen asked if there could be a crosswalk from the Green to the Arts of Tolland building.

45. A citizen said she thought that, if asked, citizens of Tolland would object to splitters. She requested a hand vote. A hand vote was taken and it appeared that the majority of people present were not in favor of splitter islands.

The State representative said alternatives were considered but the State thinks splitter are the best choice to meet their intended goals.

46. A citizen asked if the placement of splitter islands affects accident rates? He said he thought they would increase the number of accidents.

47. A citizen asked who would maintain planters if they are used in the splitter islands?

The State representative said the Town would be responsible. He asked if flush splitter islands would be less objectionable.

Consensus of the people at the meeting was “no”.

48. A citizen asked how the splitter islands would be made visible.

The State representative said the ends of the islands would have signs to identify them.

49. A citizen said he did not think the proposed calming devices are historic and they would change Green. In addition, he believes these changes would create a super highway.

50. A citizen asked if there could there be a 3 way stop from Rt 74 to Rt 195?

The State representative said there is too much volume and would create even more congestion.

51. A citizen suggested decreasing the speed limit to 15 mph with proper signage

52. A citizen suggested that a crosswalk be added from Rt 74 to Rt 195 on north side from the Green to the Church.

53. A citizen asked if cul-de-sacs could be used at the end of Tolland Green Road North and South?

The State representative said they could not be used because of fire truck issues.

54. A citizen suggested decreasing the speed limits instead of spending money on construction.

55. A citizen suggested that rumble strips be used to slow traffic.

The State representative said they would be too noisy and cannot be placed across State roads.

56. A citizen suggested that the State does the least invasive and expensive first. She suggested putting up signs first to slow traffic. Then study if it works.

The State representative said Pavement markings have been changed and have tried intermittent improvements without desired success.

Werbner said this plan was requested by the Town and by the people who live in the area. Incremental change would not work and it is important to slow traffic and prevent confusion at these intersections.

57. A citizen asked what are the costs of the splitter islands.

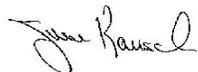
The State representatives said costs are minimal considering the scope of the project.

The State representative closed by saying the State would be investigating the discussed concerns. He added that once the plan is revised they would return to the Town to get their opinion and support for the project.

A representative of the Town Council thanked the state and the public for attending the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05pm

Respectfully submitted,



June Kausch
Clerk, Inland Wetlands Commission